

[John Freeman]

[??] Dup

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER George Hartman ADDRESS 2438 W. Lincoln, Nebraska.

DATE Dec. 13, 1938 SUBJECT Folklore

1. Name and address of informant. John Freeman, 2620 No. 45th St.
2. Date and time of interview. Tuesday 9 to 12.
3. Place of interview. 2630 No. 45th. Lincoln, Nebraska.
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.

Irene Freeman, 2620 No. 45th St.

5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you. None
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc. Nice. [C15 ??]

FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER George Hartman ADDRESS 2438 W. Lincoln, Nebr.

DATE Dec. 13, 1938 SUBJECT Folklore

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT John Freeman, 2620 No. 45th

1. Ancestry.

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2. Place and date of birth. Illinois, 1860
3. Family. Wife.
4. Place and date of birth
5. Education, with dates.
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates. Farmer
7. Special skills and interests
8. Community and religious activities.
9. Description of informant. Tall, lean.
10. Other points gained in interview. Son of Daniel Freeman first homesteader.

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

NAME OF WORKER George Hartman ADDRESS 2438 W Lincoln, Nebraska

DATE Dec. 13, 1938 SUBJECT Folklore

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT John Freeman 2630 No. 46 Lincoln Nebr.

One time I went on a trip to the blackhills with a partner, named Sam. We had been up in Deadwood, South Dakota and were on our way back to Nebraska. On the way back we stopped at an Indian camp and met an indian squaw. The indian squaw said: "Been to dinner?" We said that we hadn't so they invited us in their wigwams to eat.

The squaws had dishes and silverware that they had evidently received from the government reservation.

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The old indian squaw looked at me and said:

"We haven't got anything but meat," and she went to a pot and filled my plate full of meat. I ate the meal and enjoyed it immensely although it was nothing but meat.

One of the squaws said to me: "How did you like your meal?" "Fine," retorted I.

"You know what it was?"

"No."

"It was skunk."

Another time Sam and I went possum hunting. I had heard father say that it was good to eat and tasted like chicken. So we killed a couple of possum and cooked them good and hot and it tasted good to us. The dogs enjoyed it also.

The next morning we got up and I thought we might as well have cold 2 possum for breakfast as there was some of it left. We threw a piece of it to the dogs but they would not touch it. Next we tried to eat it but had to spit it out.

One time my partner and I thought we would go to Arkansas so we went down the river near Arkansas and the third day it started to rain. It rained for three weeks and nights. The river raised 73 feet and was drowning everybody on the low-lands. All kinds of traffic was going down the river. The river was flowing at a terrific rate of speed (about 40 miles per hour). One old man came down the river astraddle a log. Next a haystack that had a mule, five chickens and a boy on it. As we went down the river on our raft we noticed a lot of peculiar things. We saw a ferry boat that was tied to a tree in the middle of the river with 20 people and all of them wringing their hands wondering how they were going to get off the river.

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We passed down by the home of "Cherokee Bill." Normally Bill's home was three quarters of a mile from the river now it was in his front yard.

We discovered that a railway bridge had been washed away, or had dropped in the river. We were headed towards Fort Gibson. When we got there we found people in bad shape. A lot of them were trying to get across.

Two women and two men built a crude raft and tried to get across the river with all of their belongings. As they started across, and were halfway to the other side, the raft tipped over throwing them into the river. They lost all of their belongings but the men swam across with the woman, [getting?] them safely over to the other side.

My pal and I built a raft to carry people across the river. A large fat man wanted me to carry him over so I said "all right" and he got on. The raft tipped to one side so I asked an indian woman if she wouldn't ride across and balance the raft. She got on and I asked her if she could swim. She said she could not but she could only die once and said "Lets go over." We went across just barely making it.

One time on our homestead (Daniel's Freeman's first homestead) us boys thought we would go out and have some fun by stealing watermelons. So we got a wagon and on our way we decided to get a neighbor boy named "Hank." We told him where we knew where a swell watermelon patch was and we wanted him to go along. Hank obliged and we started off for the patch in the inky darkness. We went up one ravine and down another until we finally came to a fence. We pulled the fence down and drove the team over it where the watermelons were just on the other side. We filled the wagon full of the choicest melons and we left going aways where we split up going to our respective homes.

Early the next morning, Hank came up to our door and said: "Somebody cleaned up all of my watermelons last night." This teaches me a lesson—I'll never steal any more melons!"

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Hank never knew that it was his patch where we picked up the melons.

My father went to medical college with Wild Bill Hickok. At Ottawie, Illinois. Hickok's mother wanted him to be a preacher but Bill did not agree. However his dad compromised by sending him to college to become a doctor. This did not please Bill either and after the first term he disappeared. His folks didn't know what happened to him. In 1862 my father stopped at a station in Nebraska. A man came out and said "Hello Dan, where did you come from?" It was Wild Bill Hickok.

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My father had not seen him since they went to school together in Illinois. This was in 1862.

The two western characters Bill Hickok and Buffalo Bill were both drinkers. Buffalo Bill would get roaring drunk. The first time I ever saw him was in North Platte. Three men came down the road. Two men were holding up Buffalo Bill by the arm to Bill was drunk and cussing the other two. Hickok drank but never got drunk - it was too unhealthy for him. Hickok had a special holster for his navy pistols. It was made so that the guns would slip out from the side so he could draw faster.

The only town that I know of that is now obsolete was Caldwell, in Gage County. One of the most interesting things I have watched was a battle between a rattlesnake and bull snake. One day at plowing my plow turned over a bull snake, later on it turned over a rattlesnake. The field I was plowing was an old wheat field and was full of field mice etc. I thought I would have some fun so I got a stick and pulled the two snakes together. The rattler coiled up and got itself ready to spring but the bull snake started to slowly crawl around the rattler. The rattler would strike but would always miss the slowly approaching bull snake. Finally they the bull snake got rattler behind the head and squeezed him to death. One time a woman I know was walking alongside her horse with her child on the horse. She had a stick in her hand and suddenly she saw a rattlesnake. She hit it with the stick, killing it. No sooner had she killed this snake until another one appeared and

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then another, another until she was hysterical and almost fatigued to where she could fight them any longer. She finally got away from them 5 taking her child and horse home. She told her husband and he and the hired man went back to the scene where they found 100 or more dead rattlesnakes. When we were boys we did things just as young boys do today. We had to have our mischief even though we were risking our lives to do it. One day us boys were riding along when we came to a farm. A farmer was sitting on the porch with a rifle across his knees and a jug beside him. We had noticed that he had a lucious patch of watermelons so I popped up "How much for a good watermelon." The farmer replied he would sell one for forty cents. "Thats too high," said I. He said, "I've got a good gun here and a couple of two dogs so don't try to steal any of those melons."

We accepted his challenge and that night we came back to raid his patch. We took all of his best melons and also cut one in half, cut out all of the insides of it, filled it with dirt and put pegs in it to hold it together. We then set it on his porch. He and his dogs slept soundly all of the time this happened.

A man that lived in Beatrice tole me this story—One time he lived out on the farm he had to go to town to get some ammunition for his gun. So he started out. He only had one round of ammunition left in his gun. On the way to town he was surrounded by a pack of wolves. He did the best thing possible and climbed up a tree which protuded from a bank. He tore off a large club from the tree and started hitting the wolves on the head. He hit and hit keeping it up all night. When morning came he was about all done in. But there were 150 dead wolves laying all around the tree.